

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5449
INFO USDOC WASHDC
AMEMBASSY VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 1376

VIENNA FOR VONTILLIUS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: BTRA, PGOV, CZ
SUBJECT: EMBASSY PLANS FOR AMBASSADOR'S RECEPTION IN BRATISLAVA
CONSULATE GENERAL

REF: PRAGUE 1360

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY EXPLAINS PLANS TO HOLD JUNE 24 RECEPTION,
HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR FOR INCHEBA FAIR PARTICIPANTS AND OTHERS,
IN OUR LONG-VACANT CONSULATE GENERAL BUILDING IN BRATISLAVA.
ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN OUR PLANNING FOR THE FIRST USG-SPONSORED PAVILION
(AS DISTINCT FROM THE MORE MODEST CATALOGUE SHOWS IN PREVIOUS
YEARS) AT BRATISLAVA'S UPCOMING INCHEBA CHEMICAL FAIR, THE
EMBASSY WANTS TO BRING TO THE DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION ONE
ASPECT THAT HAS POLITICAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL
SIGNIFICANCE. WE PLAN TO HOLD A MODEST EVENING RECEPTION,
HOSTED BY THE AMBASSADOR, IN OUR LONG VACANT CONSULATE
GENERAL BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN BRATISLAVA ON SATURDAY,
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JUNE 24, THE OPENING DAY OF THE FAIR. INVITEES
WOULD INCLUDE U.S. BUSINESSMEN EXHIBITING AT INCHEBA,
COMMERCIAL CONTACTS AND SELECTED OFFICIALS FROM SLOVAKIA,
WHOM WE SELDOM SEE.

3. OUR REASONS FOR USING THE CONSULATE ARE SEVERAL:
(A) OUR PAVILION AT THE RIVERSIDE FAIRGROUNDS IS

PATENTLY UNSUITABLE FOR THE RECEPTION. IT IS BASICALLY A SHED WITHOUT WALLS SITUATED IN THE MAINSTREAM OF FAIR-GOING PEDESTRIANS AND PROVIDES NO WAY OF LIMITING ACCESS TO THE RECEPTION. (B) THE COST OF HOLDING THE RECEPTION IN A BRATISLAVA HOTEL FAR EXCEEDS AVAILABLE FUNDS BUDGETED FOR THE RECEPTION. (C) THE CONSULATE, BY VIRTUE OF ITS CONVENIENT LOCATION, SPACE AND FUNCTIONING KITCHEN FACILITIES, IS WELL-SUITED TO THIS PURPOSE. WE WOULD, OF COURSE, HAVE TO DO SOME LIMITED REFURBISHING OF THE MAIN FLOOR AREA TO ALLEVIATE ITS PRESENT STARKLY/UNFURNISHED APPEARANCE, BUT THIS PRESENTS NO SERIOUS PROBLEM. WE ESTIMATE THAT WE CAN HOLD A PLEASANT, THOUGH HARDLY LAVISH, RECEPTION FOR ABOUT 100 PEOPLE FOR LESS THAN THE \$650 ALLOTTED. (D) WE HAVE LONG WANTED TO USE THE CONSULATE DISCREETLY FOR SUCH AN EVENT TO REMIND THE GOC, AND PARTICULARLY THE SLOVAKS, THAT WE OWN THE BUILDING AND INTEND TO MAINTAIN A LIMITED PRESENCE IN SLOVAKIA. WE DO NOT INTEND TO CHALLENGE THE GOC'S DECISION NOT TO ALLOW US TO OPERATE A FULL SCALE CONSULATE IN THE BUILDING, EVEN THOUGH WE OWN IT AND SPENT THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS TO PREPARE IT FOR RE-OPENING BEFORE THE GOC VETOED THAT MOVE AS RETALIATION FOR THE 1974 TRADE ACT PROVISIONS ON CLAIMS/GOLD. EMBASSY PERSONNEL PERIODICALLY USE ONE OF THE APARTMENTS ON AN UPPER FLOOR OF THE BUILDING FOR BRIEF STAYS IN BRATISLAVA, AND ON AMCIT EXCHANGE VISITOR

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HAS BEEN LIVING IN A SECOND CONSULATE APARTMENT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. THE GOC IS WELL AWARE OF THIS AND HAS NEVER OBJECTED. HOWEVER, WE FEEL WE CAN AND SHOULD USE THE OCCASION OF THE AMBASSADOR'S VISIT TO BRATISLAVA AND INCHEBA TO USE OUR PROPERTY, FROM WHICH WE ARE SO SELDOM ALLOWED TO DERIVE ANY BENEFIT.

4. DURING A MAY 22 CALL ON ANOTHER TOPIC (REFTEL), DCM MENTIONED THESE PLANS TO ZANTOVSKY, DIRECTOR OF MFA SIXTH DEPT. ZANTOVSKY REGISTERED DISAPPROVAL, NOTING THAT THESE FACILITIES SHOULD NOT BE USED "FOR OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS." WE DO NOT INTEND TO CHANGE OUR PLANS BECAUSE OF THIS PRELIMINARY REACTION SINCE A ONE-TIME RECEPTION IS A FAR CRY FROM OPERATING A FULL-TIME CONSULATE. SHOULD GOC TRY FLATLY TO FORBID US TO HOLD THE RECEPTION AS PLANNED, WE PLAN TO DRAW THEIR ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE OPERATED A COMMERCIAL OFFICE IN NEW YORK SINCE 1967 AND TO STATE THAT THIS INEQUITY IN THEIR FAVOR MIGHT HAVE TO BE RECONSIDERED IF THEY ATTEMPT TO BLOCK A REASONABLE USE OF OUR OWN PROPERTY IN BRATISLAVA.

5. IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT WE MIGHT WIND UP WITH ONLY AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN ATTENDING THIS RECEPTION AND ALL THE CZECHOSLOVAK INVITEES BOYCOTTING IT. AT THIS

STAGE, HOWEVER, WE STILL DO NOT EXPECT GOC TO BECOME
OVERLY AGITATED BY OUR PLANS, ALTHOUGH GIVEN THE PRESENT
STATE OF OUR RELATIONS THEY COULD CHOOSE TO MAKE A MAJOR
ISSUE OF IT. WE WOULD RECONSIDER OUR POSITION SHOULD
THEY ESCALATE THE MATTER. MEANWHILE, WE SILL CONTINUE
PREPARATIONS FOR THE RECEPTION IN THE CONSULATE AND WE
HEREBY SOLICIT THE DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS ON OUR PLANS
FOR JUNE 24 RECEPTION.
BYRNE

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